

Mr. Speaker, last year at this time Congressional Democrats fought to address the problems with our health care system and try to extend health care coverage to uninsured Americans. The health care reform effort was stopped by the Republican leadership. Since that time, another 1.4 million Americans have lost their health insurance, raising the number of uninsured to 43 million. This is becoming the annual rate of people losing their health insurance—a million people a year.

Now the Republicans want to take away health insurance from even more people by shredding our Nation's insurance safety net of Medicare and Medicaid. What a difference that 1 year makes. Last year, we talked about how many more Americans could get health insurance, this year Republicans are talking about how many people they can take health insurance away from, supposedly in order to save money. But we know that as the number of uninsured Americans grows, health care costs go up for everyone—when the uninsured don't get preventive care, they have to go to the emergency rooms for expensive procedures when their health problems become serious.

Under the Republican plan, not only will more families be uninsured and have to face the frightening prospect of being unable to take their children to the doctor when they are sick, but more families will feel the squeeze as they attempt to stretch their dollars between their children's education and rising health care premiums.

Mr. Speaker, even the trustees of the Medicare Trust Fund oppose the Republican plan. The problems we face with health care demand a response, but a long-term solution requires more than slashing health care coverage. The need remains to not consider Medicare and Medicaid in a vacuum, but address the health care system as a whole.

WHEN IT COMES TO AGRICULTURE, LOOK AT THE FACTS

(Mr. DE LA GARZA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DE LA GARZA. Madam Speaker, let me change the tone here briefly and get away from all of the rhetoric that we have heard and the ostrich and all of that. I do not think this will enlighten in any way the American people.

Madam Speaker, I am here to address agriculture, that agriculture is in trouble and we are having no assistance, no help from all of those people on my left that are worried about what is happening to Medicare and Medicaid. I am worried about what is happening to Medicare and Medicaid. We need to address the fraud and the abuse. If you just made every hospital play it straight and be honest, you would not have to cut and tax and also to add burdens to our seniors. I have a very poor district, and we cannot afford to pay more. We need to work it out.

But let me say one thing, I am frustrated. The board of trustees of the Democrats? Where do you get that? Read the law. Find out who named them. They were Bush's trustees. They were Reagan's trustees. And for some-

one to fix up little pair paper and come and read it and to say the President's board of trustees.

AGRICULTURE POLICY

Madam Speaker, I am here today to express my concerns and clear up some fallacies in regard to Agriculture and Agriculture programs generally. I am very disturbed about the recent attacks on Agriculture from people within the Agriculture community who should know better, and from those outside the Agriculture community who jeopardize the national security of our Nation by their ignorance of Agriculture policy.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to examine the facts, outside the editorials, which daily attack the most successful farm sector in the world.

1995 Estimated total Federal spending: \$1.531 Trillion

1995 Estimated farm income support programs: \$9.8 Billion (0.6% of Federal spending)

1994 Export of farm products: \$43.5 Billion

1994 Net farm exports: \$17.1 Billion

Cost of food for—

Average American: 10% of earned income

Average Japanese: 19% of earned income

Average Russian: 30% of earned income

These figures are the cold, hard, unvarnished, facts. Outside the rhetoric, and outside the debate, nothing but the facts.

In spite of these successes, you still hear critics of the farm programs say that the system isn't working. To them I say: Examine your facts.

Second, I must take issue with the process in which we are now engaged on the Agriculture Committee. Never have I seen a process that is so designed to not only reach a specific, dictated policy outcome, but to also keep the results of that dictated policy from the very people whom it would effect most.

The committee has held no hearing on the "Freedom to Farm" policy. If Agriculture and the American public are supposed to benefit from the implementation of this policy, why not have a hearing and let them voice their support, concerns, or opposition. Let us make these changes in the light with understanding and knowledge, not in the dark with misconception and ignorance.

The imperial leadership has said to the committee members, on both sides of the aisle, your expertise in Agriculture policy is irrelevant, either you pass the so-called Freedom to Farm or else. What is the "or else" that farmers and ranchers are now facing? It is threats of retaliation against Members who voted their district interests over the dictates of the leadership and the elimination of the Congress on Agriculture.

All these threats and intimidation are because the committee had a serious bipartisan disagreement over an option of farm policy. I say "option" because that is what "Freedom to Farm" is. It is merely one policy option that Members can enact to effectuate change in farm policy. It is not the only option, merely one. Anyone who thinks that it is the only way to bring change to farm programs has a very twisted and distorted view of agricultural policy.

Third, I oppose the imposition of additional unneeded cuts on agriculture just because the leadership wants to enact a \$250 billion tax cut. Democrats in committee voted for an alternative that would save \$4.4 billion and meet the reconciliation goals set out in the earlier

reconciliation package offered by Democrats. This package balanced the budget in 7 years. \$13.4 billion in cuts is not needed if we drop the \$250 billion tax cut.

To my colleagues who demand a tax cut, I say, I like tax cuts also. Tax cuts make you popular. However, we are not up here to win a popularity contest we are sent up here by our constituents to govern responsibly. Let's come together to balance the budget and then we can come together and hand out goodies.

Fourth, let the editorials stop and check their facts and give thanks for the American farmer. They can afford, from their well fed position, to be critical of programs of which they know nothing. The European Community spends six times more on their farmers than we spend in the United States. Instead of trying to unilaterally disarm American farmers, they should be writing editorials in praise of them.

One egregious example of their ignorance is writing that we do not allow producers to plant wheat, corn, cotton, rice, etc. This is ludicrous. These programs are voluntary. A farmer can plant anything he wants outside the program. The program merely provides for those farmers who desire it, the choice to participate and minimize their risk. If we are going to be critical of these programs, if we are going to demand change, if we want real reform, then we must do it with knowledge and not rhetoric.

Let us give thanks for the American farmer, the envy of the world. It is not right for us to criticize the very hand that feeds us. Let us join with them to continue to make American agriculture the success it is today.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. DELAY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

REGULATION OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SKAGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SKAGGS. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned first thing this morning, there was a very interesting hearing yesterday before the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight on investigations having to do with the so-called Istook-McIntosh-Ehrlich proposal that masquerades as if it were